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ABSTRACT

This document focuses on how effective grant development and management can help generate added revenue for community colleges. Some general tips for grant management include: reviewing and maintaining the college's mission; aligning the grant department with all other development departments of the college; and using an experienced grant coordinator to oversee grant acquisition (proposals), administration, allocation, operation, and evaluation. The grant coordinator should be familiar with all guidelines of grant acquisitions including eligibility, grantor's priorities, award amounts, application procedures, and deadlines. Community colleges and grant coordinators also must be familiar with the various types of funding sources for grants, including: (1) public grant sources (federal/state/local government funded); and (2) private grant sources (funded by foundations, corporations, associations, unions, local civic groups, and families). An effective proposal is seen as the most important factor in acquiring grants. Reference guides and informational Web sites on grant writing, grant sources, and grant administration are provided throughout the document. (MKF)

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Grants Management at Community Colleges

By Kelly Hall

Introduction

Less than 6.5 percent of the revenue at public associate-degree-granting institutions comes from federal (non-tuition) and private sources (U.S. Department of Education; 1998). As local and state public financial support has become more tenuous at community colleges, obtaining other means of support is necessary to start, maintain, and expand programs (Reeve & Ballard, 1993). This Digest summarizes the basic principles of grants funding development at community colleges. Information provided is based on the author's experience as a grant writer at a community college and as the editor of a grants information newsletter, as well as the opinions of experts about grants development.

General Tips for Effective Grants Administration

Successful grants development requires more than writing grants. Below are some tips that might help a community college develop its grants administration function.

- The first step in grants funding development is to review the institution's mission, goals, and objectives. One person who understands institutional and programmatic goals and is able to identify appropriate grant resources should be designated to coordinate grants (Matsoukas, 1996).
- The grants coordinator should not administer all grant programs nor write every grant proposal. Rather, the grants coordinator role should be to seek funding opportunities that match institutional objectives, inform program leaders about grant opportunities, guide grant seekers in following proposal guidelines, review and edit document proposals, ensure the ethical treatment of human and other subjects in research and other projects, and help implement necessary processes for appropriate management of granted funds.
- A qualified administrator with accounting, reporting, and negotiation skills should manage granted funds (Hale, 1994).
- Grants development explicitly "written into" job descriptions implies the institution values these activities (Snyder, 1993; Miner, Miner, & Griffith, 1998). Without explicit validation, grants development becomes "extra" work.
- Grants development functions should be closely aligned with other development functions such as those that seek monies from individual donors (Matsoukas, 1996). These efforts should be complementary (Rowh, 1987.)
- U.S. Census and similar data, college catalogs, institutional planning documents, and grantor lists should be housed together for easy access. Ideally, this space would also have the necessary tools for tracking funding opportunities and writing proposals -- an on-line computer with spreadsheet, word processing, and searching capabilities.

Evaluation of Grant Guidelines

Guidelines, and requests for proposals (RFPs), applications (RFAs), quotes (RFQs), or information (RFIs) can often be downloaded from the Internet or may be requested from the grant program manager of the funding organization. From guidelines and requests, the following information should be carefully examined to evaluate the appropriateness of the grant and program before deciding to submit an application.

Eligibility indicates types of organizations or individuals that can apply for funds. The grantor's funding *priorities* and the ideas expressed in the grant application should match. While a perfect match may not exist initially, aligning the project's purpose with that of the grantor may simply be a matter of thinking creatively to reach institutional goals.

Information about grant *award amounts* helps college leaders decide which opportunities to seek. The costs of developing a grant proposal can be quite high, so the net gain of the potential award amount should be assessed in terms of institutional resources available to prepare and fulfill a competitive application. *Application processes* vary. Some grantors require a letter of inquiry or intent prior to submission of a full proposal. Others discourage contact between the grantor administrator and potential grantee.

Questions that need to be answered prior to submitting an application include issues of the fit between the college's and the grantor's priorities, institutional capacity for matching funds and providing facilities and other resources for implementing and sustaining a grant funded program, and opportunity costs.

For efficiency, information about grants should be organized in a database, spreadsheet, or "tickler" file for easy tracking by grant seekers. Information should be easily accessed by anyone within the college to encourage creative collaborations. Many community colleges grants coordinators use Web sites to disseminate information about grant opportunities. For examples, see the following Web sites:

- *http://www.lanecc.edu/instadv/grants.htm*
- *http://www.Sinclair.edu/departments/grants/index.html*
- *http://uni.edu/advance/grantinfo/index.html.*

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Sources of Grants

Public grantors include federal, state, and local governments. Private funding organizations include foundations, corporations, businesses, civic groups, associations, and individuals (Dodson-Pennington, 1995). Internet sites, directories, and specific topic guides are all places to find grant fund resources.

Public grant sources

The Internet is the easiest vehicle to find federal funding opportunities. The Catalog for Domestic Assistance (*http://www.cfda.gov*) allows key word searches. The FirstGov Internet portal site (*http://www.FirstGov.gov*) will take searchers to specific agency Web sites that provide program descriptions, application guidelines, and contact information. Community colleges are in a prime position to seek federal funds since many appropriations are geared to help disadvantaged populations. The Department of Education is the most logical place to start searching for funds to serve the community college mission. Other federally legislated appropriations for grants available to community colleges include funds from the Departments of Commerce, Labor, and Health and Human Services and the National Science Foundation.

State level departments administer funds from federal programs and programs appropriated through the state legislature. An understanding of the state agency's grant administration processes is necessary to monitor grant opportunities at the state level.

Private grant sources

Information about private grant opportunities is provided by foundation guidelines, annual reports, and from Internal Revenue Service 990 forms -- documents that provide information about a private foundation's priorities, guidelines, and past grantees.

The Foundation Center is a rich source of private and corporate funding and information about grants to individuals -- from awards to scholarships and research. Foundation Center information can be accessed via the Internet (*http://fdncenter.org*) and in the Directories it publishes yearly. Public libraries house Foundation Center Directories.

Corporate and trade association information is offered in Dun and Bradstreet/Gale Industry Reference Handbooks by McConnell and Hall (1999). Association information about industries and other related areas is found in the Encyclopedia of Associations: Regional, State, and Local Organizations edited by Phillips (1999). Listings of local civic groups are available through Chambers of Commerce and organizations such as the United Way.

Grant resource guides

Resource guides may be free but are often expensive. Free guides about specific topic areas may be offered as part of membership in a professional association or through the Government Print Office (*http://www.gpo.gov*). The Council for Resource Development of the American Association of Community Colleges (*http://www.ppcc.cccoes.edu/crd/*) is an excellent resource for community college grant seekers. Education Funding News is a guide offered through subscription by the Thompson Publishing Group (*http://www.thompson.com*). Several ERIC documents provide guides to resources. For examples, see The Vocational Education Resource Package (ED 357 798) from the Evaluation and Training Institute (1993); and Activities in Support of Two-Year College Science, Mathematics, Engineering, and Technology Education (ED 395 637) by the NSF (1996).

Proposal Writing

Effective "grantspenship," like other forms of writing, takes practice. Common elements of proposals include the following: Proposal letter; Introduction; Statement of the problem and need; Objectives; Methods or Plan of operation; Project management; Evaluation; Dissemination; Budget(s); Appendixes; and Abstract.

There are many resources to consult for improving "grantspenship." Bauer (1999) has written four editions of a grants manual. Miner, Miner, & Griffith (1998) offer examples of good proposals. Reeve & Ballard (1993) write about proposal development for community college faculty. The Foundation Center offers an on-line proposal- writing course (*http://fdncenter.org*). The Council for Resource Development of the American Association of Community College provides an array of professional development opportunities for grant seekers.

Conclusion

Extensive opportunities exist for generating revenue through grants development at community colleges. To take better advantage of the opportunities, an understanding of effective grants development practices, increased familiarity with funding sources, and greater knowledge of available resources is beneficial to community college personnel.

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